

Message Text

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ACTION INR-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 10900

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR, XH, YO, GR
SUBJECT: REPORTED GREEK/YUGOSLAV MILITARY DISCUSSIONS

REF: STATE 272526, BELGRADE 8200, ATHENS 10506 (NOTAL)

1. DURING CALL ON NEWLY REAPPOINTED MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF NOVEMBER 30, I RAISED SUBJECT OF MARY ANN WEAVER'S STORY IN THE WASHINGTON POST ON GREEK/YUGOSLAV DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP AND COMMENTED THAT HER DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WAS GOING ON SOUNDED MUCH LIKE WHAT AVEROFF HAD TOLD ME AFTER HE RETURNED FROM VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA IN OCTOBER 1976. AVEROFF ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES WEAVER MENTIONED WERE BEING CONDUCTED BUT SAID SHE HAD NOT GOTTEN THE STORY FROM HIM.

2. AVEROFF RECALLED THAT UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM CARAMANLIS HE HAD TOLD DEFENSE MINISTER LJUBICIC IN OCTOBER 1976 THAT GREECE WAS PREPARED TO GIVE YUGOSLAVIA ALL POSSIBLE MILITARY ASSISTANCE
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SHORT OF PROVIDING GREEK TROOPS IF YUGOSLAVIA WERE ATTACKED BY A THIRD COUNTRY. THAT COMMITMENT IS STILL VALID AND WAS REITERATED IN SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FORM BY VADM KONOFAOS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA. FOR YUGOSLAVS' PART, DEPUTY CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES PEKIC DURING VISIT HERE LAST APRIL ASSURED AVEROFF THAT SITUATION OF APRIL 1941 WOULD NEVER ARISE AGAIN. WHEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN, PEKIC SAID YUGOSLAVIA WOULD NEVER AGAIN ALLOW GREECE TO

BE ATTACKED BY A THIRD COUNTRY THROUGH YUGOSLAV TERRITORY. HOWEVER, AVEROFF CONTINUED, THESE MUTUAL ASSURANCES DO NOT CONSTITUTE A "DEFENSE AGREEMENT" AS ALLEGED BY WEAVER, AND THE TWO COUNTRIES DO NOT HAVE AND ARE NOT WORKING TOWARD ANY MORE FORMAL PACT.

3. AS TO OTHER SPECIFICS OF THE WEAVER STORY, AVEROFF SAID THERE HAD BEEN SOME FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSIONS AT THE MILITARY LEVEL BUT THEY HAD BEEN VERY GENERAL IN NATURE. THERE IS NO PLAN TO CONDUCT JOINT MANEUVERS OR TRAINING EXERCISES BECAUSE BOTH SIDES REALIZE THESE MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS PROVOCATIVE BY "SOME THIRD COUNTRIES." AVEROFF SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO DISCUSSION WITH YUGOSLAVS OF TROOP REDUCTIONS ALONG THE BORDER BUT THAT IN FACT SOME GREEK TROOPS HAD BEEN REMOVED UNILATERALLY. (I HAVE JUST READ ATHENS DAO 301413Z NOV (NOTAL) REPORTING THAT CHIEF OF HELLENIC ARMY STAFF GRATSIOS HAD TOLD OUR ARMY ATTACHE THAT GREEK TROOP CONCENTRATIONS ON THE YUGOSLAV BORDER HAD ACTUALLY INCREASED. WE WILL TRY TO RESOLVE THIS CONTRADICTION BUT SUSPECT IT RESULTS FROM AVEROFF'S OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF A RATHER COMPLICATED CHANGE IN DISPOSITION OF MILITARY FORCES ON THAT BORDER SINCE 1974.)

4. AVEROFF IS VERY PLEASED WITH IMPROVEMENTS IN GREEK/YUGOSLAV DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WHICH HE BELIEVES ARE IN THE INTEREST NOT ONLY OF THE TWO COUNTRIES THEMSELVES BUT OF NATO AND THE WESTERN WORLD AS WELL. HE HOPES TO FOSTER EVEN CLOSER COOPERATION BUT RECOGNIZES THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES CAN GO ONLY SO FAR BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE AREA.
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